MEMORANDUM

To: Council on Academic Policy

From: Subcommittee on Interdisciplinary Studies Majors
       (Fred Ablondi, Jay Barth, Steve Duerringer, Ian King, Garrett McAinsh, and
       David Sutherland)

In the attached, we propose alterations to the present policy on Interdisciplinary Majors
(found on pp. 224-5 of the 2005-06 Catalog). These changes are meant to achieve
several goals:

a) To clarify a major approval process that has become confusing over the past
   several years by clearly establishing the Associate Provost as the final
   determinant for their approval;

b) To sharpen the language to emphasize the need for thematic coherence and
   rigor in Interdisciplinary Studies majors, particularly in the requirement for
   upper-level courses and a capstone experience;

c) To ease the process for students wishing to pursue such a major by clarifying
   where the students might go to begin the process and by reducing the number
   of faculty required to serve on a major committee to two.
Interdisciplinary Studies

Capable and self-motivated students wishing to explore major courses of study not offered by the College may petition for an Interdisciplinary Studies major. The major allows such students the freedom to design and develop a course of study which combines classes taken from several departments or areas. Each Interdisciplinary Studies major must have a coherent thematic principle governing the selection and sequencing of courses in the major and it must be consistent with the goals of a liberal arts education. Students who would like to explore an Interdisciplinary Studies major are urged to consult with their faculty advisor or the office of the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs.

A student wishing to pursue an interdisciplinary major should, before spring registration of the sophomore year, find a faculty advisor who is interested in mentoring him or her through this major. Under no circumstances should this be done later than the fall semester of the student’s junior year.

- The student and advisor, working together, will draft a program of study satisfying the requirements for an interdisciplinary major (see below).
- The student will write a justification for this major, articulating its overarching theme and stating his or her aims and the way the major will satisfy them.
- The student and advisor will recruit one or two more faculty members to constitute the supervisory committee for the major. The advisor will chair this
committee. The committee will review and approve, with possible modifications, the proposed major and its justification.

- The proposed major, signed by the student and the members of the committee, will be sent to the Associate Provost for approval, along with the student’s narrative justification for it.

- If the Associate Provost approves the proposed major, he or she will notify the student and the committee in writing that the major has been accepted. The Associate Provost will inform the Registrar of the student’s major requirements.

- Once the major has been accepted, any changes must be approved by the committee and by the Associate Provost, who will report the changes to the Registrar.

In addition to its thematic coherence, an interdisciplinary studies major must include the following components:

- A clear title for the major;

- At least 10 courses (with suitable alternate courses, if appropriate). As with any major, at least 50% of major courses must be taken in residence at the College and a minimum grade point average of 2.0 in the major must be achieved;

- No fewer than 4 of the major courses at the 300- or 400- level;

- One of the required courses must be a senior capstone experience with elements that are methodologically appropriate for the major. At the time
of the major’s proposal, a short description of the nature of this capstone course should be included.
HIST 330-G *Culture and Colonialism* (HP, CW)
This seminar focuses on selected readings concerning the cultural impact of colonialism in Africa. Topics include domesticity, health and medicine, etiquette, music and clothing styles, gangsters, films, and Christianity. (S)

HIST 377-A *Indians and Iberians in the Americas* (HP)
This course is a reading intensive seminar designed to introduce students to the study of the colonial encounter between Indians and Iberians in colonial Latin America. It will focus on the various methods used by ethnohistorians used to understand these encounters from indigenous perspectives. (S, PM)

HIST 430-G *Topics in African History* (HP)
This reading course focuses on topics in African history that interest students and the instructor.

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Students wishing to explore major courses of study not offered by individual departments may petition for an Interdisciplinary Studies major. Under the guidance of a faculty committee proposed by the student and approved and appointed by the Registrar, such students may develop majors combining courses from several departments or areas. Each Interdisciplinary Studies major must have a coherent thematic principle governing the selection and sequencing of courses in the major and must be approved in all particulars by the faculty committee. Students who would like to explore an Interdisciplinary Studies major are urged to consult with their faculty advisors or with the Office of the Registrar.

The process for developing a major in interdisciplinary studies should follow the following three steps.

- **Declaration of Intent.** During the sophomore year, students should declare an intention to pursue an interdisciplinary studies major by submitting a written proposal to the Registrar. Under no
circumstances should a student declare such intent later than the first term of his or her junior year. The written proposal should contain the following items:

* a list of eight to fourteen courses proposed to constitute the major,
* a proposed senior capstone experience,
* a narrative account of the aims the student intends to fulfill by means of the proposed major,
* reasoning that supports the desirability of the proposed major,
* a proposed committee of at least three but not more than four faculty members with one of the faculty members designated as committee chair,
* signature of the student’s academic advisor, and
* signature of each faculty member on the proposed committee.

• **Formation of Committee.** The Registrar appoints the proposed committee of faculty to review the student’s proposal for an Interdisciplinary Studies major. The committee sends to the Registrar a recommendation to either approve, or not approve, the proposal.

• **Authorization of Major.** On receipt of a positive recommendation from the committee, the Registrar authorizes the student to pursue the major. The committee that recommended approval then advises the student as the departmental faculty for the major. This committee must approve any variations from the original proposal and grades the capstone project.